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Results of a survey on the classification and arrangement of microforms in 147 moderate sized college and university libraries in the United States are presented. Statistics on the size of microform holdings and arrangement of microforms are given. The absence of standards for arrangement of and access to microforms is discussed, and treatment of periodicals in microform is further analyzed. (Author/EMH)

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CLASSIFICATION AND ARRANGEMENT OF MICROFORMS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

Results of a survey on the classification and arrangement of microforms in 147 moderate sized college and university libraries in the United States are presented. Statistics on the size of microform holdings and arrangement of microforms are given. The absence of standards for arrangement of and access to microforms is discussed, and treatment of periodicals in microform is further analyzed.

Investment in microforms entails a commitment to providing access to this material. In this context, the questions of how microforms differ from other library materials, and how these differences should be reflected in housing, arranging, and providing access to microforms gain significance.

Given these problems, an investigation of how they are perceived, solved, or possibly ignored in college and university libraries of moderate size (those reporting 120,000 to 500,000 volumes in the 1972-73 American Library Directory) was undertaken during the spring of 1975. Of the 200 questionnaires sent, 147 responses (74%) were received.

Differences of opinion exist as to meaningful criteria for evaluating the size of a microform collection.(1) For this reason the libraries were asked for the number of the various types of microforms which they hold, and also for an estimate of the relative size of broad categories into which microform holdings might be grouped. The first measurement gives some idea of the physical size of the microform collection and of the potential access and filing problems. The second measurement is relevant to questions of bibliographic access as well as the philosophical considerations of what types of material are most desirable (or most frequently acquired) in microform. The responses to these questions are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

The figures in Table 3 indicate that a large percentage of microform holdings are not typical monographs. Because traditional library cataloging procedure is based on providing access to books or other monographs, the relevance of such bibliographic tools to microforms may be questioned. Surely other forms of bibliographic access should be considered for per-

iodicals, special collections, research and technical reports, and government documents.(2)(3) Modification of existing library practices for categories such as periodicals or government documents may be a partial solution.

ARRANGEMENT OF MICROFORMS

Most of the responding libraries (78%) house microforms in specific microform collections, while only 1% intershelve microforms with other library materials. Thirteen per cent use a combination of these approaches, and 8% term their arrangement "other".

Of those libraries which house microforms separately from other materials, arrangement within the collection varies. Twenty per cent of the libraries use some sort of sequential arrangement (i.e. an accession number), 13% classify microforms and shelve them by call number, and 29% arrange them alphabetically. Eighteen per cent mentioned that they differentiate between periodicals and monographs in microform -- periodicals are filed alphabetically, and monographs are either classified or shelved by a sequential arrangement. There appears to be no correlation between the size of a microform collection and its arrangement.

This variety in the arrangement of microforms within a specific collection (including the 20% whose system could only be classified as "other") may be a reflection of the absence of a standard or accepted practice which makes sense for arranging the various materials purchased in microform. While some standards have been proposed (4)(5)(6), several reasons for their limited adoption can be seen. Clearly, microform collections vary in size, clientele, physical environment, and monetary

resources. Also, the different arrangement within microform projects (the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) microfiche, Evans' American Bibliography, the American Periodicals Series, to name a few) make standardization difficult, and perhaps undesirable.

SERVICING THE MICROFORM COLLECTION

Methods of servicing the microform collection have advanced since the days when closed stack storage with retrieval at specified times was common. While 18% of the libraries responding have a closed storage system for microforms, the material is available immediately on request. Sixty-eight per cent provide users with open access to microforms, and several respondents added a note that they have library personnel available for assistance. Seventeen libraries (12%) have a combination of closed and open stacks for microforms. This would indicate some distinction between materials in microform which are both frequently used and have an easily understood method of arrangement (the New York Times or ERIC) as opposed to microforms less frequently used or having less intuitively obvious arrangements. No significant difference in the size of the collections which have open or closed stacks was observed.

PERIODICALS IN MICROFORM

A specific application of microforms is to the problems associated with periodical holdings. Microforms for back files save space and binding costs, and also reduce the number of stolen or mutilated issues (although one library reported that it keeps the microfilm of Playboy behind the desk because eleven reels had been stolen from open shelves). How-

ever, microforms entail added costs for reading and copying equipment, reduce browsing possiblities, and require the user to interface with a machine. Of the libraries which responded, 128 (87%) indicate that they subscribe to some titles in microform in lieu of binding, the median number of titles being twenty-eight.

It was thought that microforms of periodicals would be an obvious area to interfile microforms and hard copy because of the frequency with which a single title may be represented by both forms. Interfiling would eliminate the extra step of determining where in the library a particular issue of a periodical is located. Nine per cent of the libraries interfile microform the bound periodicals, while 87% house periodical microforms in a separate microform area. Those which interfile the forms had an average of 48 titles on microform subscription, as compared to 23 for those which house periodicals in microform with other microforms. However, in the libraries which interfile microform and hard copy periodicals, microforms of periodicals account for approximately 17% of the microform holdings, while periodicals average 31% of the microform holdings in the other responding libraries. Although the sample was small, the twelve libraries which interfile all periodicals (and also indicated total microform holdings) average larger total microform collections (237,000 as compared with 170,000 for other libraries).

CONCLUSION

Both the differences and similarities in the ways in which academic libraries arrange and provide access to microforms are worthy of further investigation. Various approaches in the arrangement of a microform

collection are indicative of the absence of an accepted practice. Standards may develop, or be found to be unnecessary, as microtext librarians continue to exchange ideas. Questions concerning bibliographic access are also receiving considerable attention. Understanding the types of material which libraries acquire in microform will help in the analysis of these problems.

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TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF LIBRARIES REPORTING
SIZE OF MICROFORM COLLECTION BY PHYSICAL UNITS

Number of Microforms (In Thousands)	Number of Libraries
0 - 1	-
1 - 5	3
5 - 10	8
10 - 15	12
15 - 20	5
20 - 50	15
50 - 100	20
100 - 200	26
200 - 500	43
500 +	6
No Answer	9

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF LIBRARIES REPORTING
MICROFORM HOLDINGS BY PHYSICAL UNITS

Number of Microforms (In Thousands)	Libraries Reporting Microfiche	Libraries Reporting Microfilm	Libraries Reporting Microprint*	Libraries Reporting Ultrafiche
0 - 1	12	3	7	4
1 - 5	12	31	6	1
5 - 10	8	39	3	-
10 - 15	3	29	4	10
15 - 20	6	22	1	6
20 - 50	13	12	18	11
50 - 100	14	1	9	-
100 - 200	38	-	15	1
200 - 500	18	-	5	1
500 +	1	-	-	-
No Answer	82	10	79	113

*The microprint holdings reflect some ambiguity, as some libraries reported holdings by the number of boxes, rather than by number of prints.

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF MICROFORM HOLDINGS CATEGORIZED BY TYPE OF MATERIAL

PERCENTAGE OF MICROFORM COLLECTION	NUMBER OF RESPONDING LIBRARIES: PERIODICALS	MONOGRAPHS	SPECIAL SUBJECT COLLECTIONS (e.g. EVANS)	RESEARCH & TECHNICAL REPORTS (e.g. ERIC)	GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
0-10 %	35	76	39	13	26
11-20 %	16	6	22	14	12
21-30 %	13	5	8	11	5
31-40 %	10	1	10	11	2
41-50 %	11	1	4	13	2
51-60 %	6	2	4	5	1
61-70 %	7	-	3	2	3
71-80 %	7	-	1	9	-
81-90 %	11	-	7	2	-
91-100%	12	1	1	4	-
No Answer	19	55	48	63	96